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LETTER

FROM

GILBERT BURNET, D.D.

TO

Mr. SIMON LOWTH, Vicar of *Cosmus-
Blene* in the Diocels of *Canterbury*.

Occasioned, by his late Book of *the sub-
ject of Church-Power*.

Reverend Sir,

I Know no other Address to you, but this of the Press, which I hope will find you out : you have forced me to deal so publickly with you, by your beginning with me ; and, which is yet worse, by your refusing to give your own Eyes that Satisfaction which I desired a neighbouring Clergyman of yours to offer you.

When I saw your Letters to the two Deans, in which you accused the Dean of St. Paul's for his copying out *unfaithfully* the Papers of Cranmer and the other Deans, which he had published, and added, *that I had*

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also

also printed them imperfect, and so had abused the House of Commons into an approbation of my History of the Reformation (where by the way, I cannot imagine why you left out the House of Lords, whose Approbation is printed with the other,) I confess, I wondred upon what you could found so heavy a Charge : I printed no Record in that Collection without comparing the Copies exactly with the Original, for I thought that too important a thing to trust it to any Person whatsoever : Therefore finding my self accused of a designed Fraud, which, if true, must needs shake the credit of my whole Book ; I did what I could to prevent your bringing that Shame upon your self, which I do now unwillingly lay on you, not so much for the support of my own Credit, as for maintaining the Reputation of that Work. I therefore desired your Neighbour to tell you, that I was sure I had printed all those Papers faithfully and exactly, without departing from the Originals in any thing but the spelling : I added, that if you thought fit to fall on any Discourse or Inference of mine, you might do as you pleased, but if you accused me of Unfaithfulness, in publishing any of the Papers that are in my Collection imperfect, I should be forced to justify my self, tho to your cost : for in such Accusations a Man ought not to be over patient. I bid him also tell you, that as I had printed those Papers exactly, so if you had a mind

mind to see the Originals themselves, I should procure them for you: this was done many Months ago. He brought me an Answer from you, that I could make nothing of; but now I see it in Print, and so I will examine it.

You say that if you may believe the Dean of *Windsor*, Dr. *Durel*, there is among these Papers in Dr. *Stillingfleet's* MS. one of Dr. *Leighton's*, in which there are two Assertions contrary to *Cranmer's* Opinion concerning Church-power, and that *Cranmer* signed Dr. *Leighton's* Paper; from which he infers that *Cranmer* changed his Mind, and subscribed to *Leighton's* Opinion; and of all this, you say *I have given no account to the World, but have omitted it in two Impressions.*

I would willingly believe the best of every Man, and make the best of all things that I can, and therefore I should have imputed this to an extream carelessness in you; but since you have charged me so severely for Unfaithfulness, and abusing the House of Commons in it, and since you refused to accept of the Satisfaction which I had offered you, I must crave leave to tell you (for it is a hard thing, and needs a Preface to soften it) that you have accused me both uncharitably as to the manner of it, and unjustly as to the matter: Since these very things that you say I have left out, are in my Collection, taken *verbatim* from the Original, which will appear by my setting

down that which you cite from the Dean of *Windsor*, and that which is in my Collection, over against one another.

There is indeed a variation in the Words, tho none in the Sense: mine is exactly according to the Original: and the Variations of the Dean of *Windsor* from it, tho they make no change in the Sense, yet are too many to be the Mistakes of a Transcriber; therefore I am apt to think that as Dr. *Duret* writ them out, he put them either in *Latin* or *French*, intending perhaps to make use of them in one of these Tongues, and that afterwards he translated them into his own *English* when the Manuscript might be perhaps no more in his power to copy them from the Original. The Reasonableness of this Conjecture will appear from a view of the Words themselves, as he and I have published them; for I have published all *Leighton's* Paper together with *Cranmer's* Subscription at the end of it.

The Words that you cite from the Dean of *Windsor*, pag. 485. of your Book, l. 24. are these.

I suppose a Bishop according to Scripture, to have Power

The Words I have, *Hist. Reform.* vol. 1. *Coll. Rec. Book* 3. pag. 227. l. 36. are these.

I suppose that a Bishop hath Authority of God as his Minister

Power from God as his Minister of creating a Presbyter, tho he ought not to promote any to the Office of a Presbyter, or admit to any other Ecclesiastical Ministry in a Commonwealth, unless the leave of the Prince be first had. But that any other have Power according to Scripture I have neither read nor learned by Example. 2. I suppose Consecration to be necessary as by imposition of hands, for so we are taught by the Examples of the Apostles.

Minister by Scripture to make a Priest, but he ought not to admit any Man to be Priest, and consecrate him, or to appoint him to any Ministry in the Church without the Princes Licence and Consent in a Christian Region. And that any other Man hath Authority to make a Priest by Scripture, I have not read, nor any Example thereof. And Pag. 230. l. 22. I suppose that there is a Consecration required as by imposition of Hands, for so we be taught by the Ensamble of the Apostles.

And Pag. 243. l. 3. from the bottom, where Dr. Leighton's Subscription is set down, there is set by it T. Cantuarien. Thus, Sir, you see you may believe the Dean of *Windfor*, and believe this further, that you have slander'd me *falsly*; if there is any harshness in these Expressions, the things themselves draw them from me, and your unaccountable Behaviour in this matter has brought them on you. I wish that instead of reading any other Books, you would read the

the Gospels and Epistles more carefully ; and before you venture to treat of such tender points as Church-power, that you will learn to practise the Rules of Justice and Christian Charity (not to speak of Prudence and common Discretion); and then the Advices of your Friends will prevail more with you than your own Heats : for tho' you flatter your self so far as to fancy (as you began your Preface) that there was a *huge d in and noise, Pannick almost and universal, raised in London and else-where, for two full Years and upwards, occasioned by your Treatise* ; I assure you I never heard of any ; tho' none, after the two worthy Deans, were more concerned in it than I was ; all that look'd into it (for I spoke with none that had quite read it) said it could hurt no body but the Bookseller or your self:tho' I have not heard that the Chancery ever gave Equity against an Author for an unsaleable Book. Many wished for the Churches sake, and for your own sake, that she might not suffer by so ill an Advocate, and that you would not discharge your Spleen on two such eminent Men, whose Works (as well as their Persons) will be had in Honour, long after both you and your Book will be forgotten. You are indeed proud of the Honour of assaulting two such Men, and tell the World that their Eminence was no small Motive to you to undertake this Work, and give this modest account of your self - (Preface, pag. 7. l. 22.)

I. 12.) *Doth the King of Israel go out as against a Flea?* I confess this is a lofty Figure, and the Application of it to your self is somewhat extraordinary. But there was a Roman Emperor that used to be shut up catching Flies, and I am afraid some will think that since you will borrow a Figure from a Crowned Head, this had become you better; but you have secured your self by writing in a Stile so unintelligible, that as I hear few read your Book, so I am confident nobody can understand it, and so to be sure they will not answer it. Yet since you tell the World that here is a *Course of Studies upon full Thoughts and a thorough Consideration*: you had best do as another Roman Emperor did, write of your self; and illustrate your Book with Annotations, and I suppose the Bookseller will take care that it shall only be to your self. You tell us that your Book is *born with a Beard*, as the Jews say *Esau was*: it is indeed hairy all over, and so rough is the shag, that it will not submit to the Discipline of a Comb. I shall only offer to your Consideration, one Passage which I hope you will not forget in your Annotations: it comes just after that humble comparing of your self to the King of Israel, and I suppose your Spirits were a little exalted upon so glorious a Figure, and so you have risen above my pitch. The words are remarkable: *Nor do those of meaner Order and Quality undertake that Authority which is*

in it self none, falls of it self to the ground, nor was ever influential upon any? This is but one of many, and is the shortest I could pick out. I suppose you had a meaning when you writ it, tho perhaps in the two full Years and upwards in which it stuck so that it is over grown with Hair, you may have lost it. I shall conclude with two short Advices; the first is That if you intend to write any more, you will learn first to write true English, and then to write good Sense: but I believe this will prove for ever hard a Task, that the best and easiest Advice can be given you, is, that you will write none at all, but for about matters of a more close and comfortable Importance in which I wish you better success than you are like to have by your Book, and am, notwithstanding the freedom with you,

Reverend Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

London, De-
cember the
20th, 1684

G. BURNET

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